

The Second Pillar of Integrative Health - Detoxification

By Li-Chuan Chen, Ph.D.

Cleansing the Body, Mind and Spirit

The Trinity of Integrative Health is based upon the three pillars, nourishment, detoxification and regeneration. This issue focuses on the second pillar, detoxification.

I met Kathryn Gale, a slender woman with a very composed demeanor and great spirit, at the Seven Spring Center in Waynesville, North Carolina, while conducting a spiritual Qigong workshop in October. She is also a gifted body worker. I asked what she had done for her own healing. She related her miraculous recovery from the brink of death with three weeks of water fasting in the hands of two seasoned Natural Hygiene medical doctors in Texas. She did some research before deciding to do the water fast in the Texas clinic. She took responsibility for her healing by making that conscious and fateful decision. I then asked her what happened to her spirit during that process. She revealed that she had a life affirming transformation. She let go of every thing during the water fast and allowed the spiritual transformation to take place. Since then she has devoted herself to helping others. Water fasting, a drastic form of detoxification, can cleanse not only our bodies but our souls as well. In contrast, I have seen a great many people go through detoxification with very limited progress. They hold onto their wounds, entrenched behavior patterns, and misguided belief systems. Blaming is the most common attitude among these unwilling people. This is the key difference between superficial and true detoxification. Kathryn's story is a prime example of the latter.

I. Natural Detoxification

Our bodies have natural detoxification mechanisms. They are able to remove detrimental toxins and wastes. Our psyche also has natural defense mechanisms to alleviate or rid us of emotional traumas. The ancients learned from nature, and that included their own bodies. They had a wide range of physical and mental techniques and healing rituals. These techniques have been practiced in the East and West, in medical systems as diverse as Naturopathy, Ayurvedic medicine, Siddha Vaidya, Traditional Chinese Medicine and Native American healing traditions. The following is a brief summary of detoxification techniques often employed by the ancients.

1. Purgative therapies: purgatives or laxatives can provide relief from diseases like arthritis and paraplegia. They are usually given in the summer to all but old people, children and pregnant women. One such treatment, Sneha Panam, is similar to the liver flush commonly administered in the U.S. Medicated ghee (clarified butter), rather than olive oil, is used to purge the liver and gallbladder for ulcers, arthritis, degenerative disease, various skin problems, psoriasis, constipation, and so forth. Other formulations for internal cleansing are available as well.

2. Emetic therapy: emetics cause vomiting to get rid of toxins. One example is the use of mustard powder: nine grams in 250ml of warm water.
3. Fasting therapy: fasting is usually advised for fibrile (fever) conditions. The choice of complete, light or liquid fasting depends on the physical health of the patient.
4. Steam therapy: steam therapy is used in localized edema to remove excess fluid in the body. Herbs and spices such as tumeric powder and nochi leaves are sometimes used with the steam.
5. Oil therapy: for diseases of the neck and head, an oil massage and bath are recommended. Oil therapy can be used for other parts of the body, such as the nose and sinuses.
6. Body work: this involves massage with or without oil. Massage is done by tapping, pressing, catching, tying, pulling, pushing or physically applying pressure for therapeutic purposes. It relaxes the body, improves the circulation, and increases vitality in the patient.
7. Solar therapy: exposing patients to sunlight is beneficial for some complaints. All parts of the body except the head can be exposed to sunlight.
8. Blood letting: in the early stages of certain diseases, toxins can be removed by blood-letting. In some advanced health conditions, blood-letting may become necessary. This procedure is done with leeches, venesection, and by drains. In Siddha Vaidya, blood-letting is also useful for psychiatric illnesses, colic pain, elephantiasis, gonococcal arthritis and blood disorders.
9. Rectal installation: this type of therapy resembles an enema but has a different purpose. For example, Vasthi, is a treatment in which prescribed medicated oils, decoctions, herbal preparations, and extracts are applied through the rectum. The herbal essences are absorbed through the intestine directly, bypassing the gastric process. It cures various diseases and purifies the body as well.

For emotional and spiritual cleansing, the ancient resorted to prayer, meditation, yoga, Qigong, vision quest, Sundance, and various healing rituals.

Detoxification IS an innate process. The balance between generation of toxins and their removal determines the state of health. When toxins are generated in a faster rate than that of detoxification, the body gradually deteriorates and prematurely ages. Toxins block the normal functions of our bodies, negative emotions and hidden beliefs blocks the body electric, and living a life without meaning and purpose demoralizes the spirit. What did the ancient know that we don't know?

II. What are Toxins?

Traditionally, toxins are defined as poisonous substances. However, some view foreign chemicals as the prime subjects while others also include metabolic wastes in the category of toxins. Here, toxins are defined more broadly as substances that create harmful effects on the body or, more subtly, affect the energetic balance of the body.

Toxins can be further divided into external or internal toxins. External toxins are those that we are exposed to on a daily basis in the environment. Internal toxins are those we generate in our bodies. They include metabolic waste products and secondary metabolic products produced by external toxins such as heavy metals, stress, emotional trauma and spiritual challenges. According to Jacqueline Krohn, M.D. and Frances Taylor, M.A., the authors of *Natural Detoxification: A Practical Encyclopedia*, external and internal toxins come from the following sources: food, water, air, plants, organisms, chemicals, toxic metals, noise, weather, temperature, altitude, radiation, electromagnetic fields, geopathic stress, excess of body chemicals, emotional traumas, and loss of spirituality and faith.

III. Benefits of Detoxification

What are the benefits of detoxification? As your body detoxifies, you can notice an overall improvement in your digestion, sinuses, blood pressure, mental clarity, memory and energy. Emotional balance and a sense of well being will follow too. With the removal of toxins, the body's self-healing ability will be liberated. The immune system will be able to cope with infectious agents, liver detoxification function will improve, and the regenerative mechanisms will start repairing damaged tissues. Chronic health problems will gradually be resolved. Indeed, detoxification is able to restore health and facilitate healing.

Dr. Richard Schulze, a famed herbalist and Oriental Medical doctor, has set up a foundation program for his patients. He encourages them to take responsibility to heal themselves with super-nutritional foods, cleansing and detoxification of the elimination organs, and immune boosting. 95% of his patients were well after finishing these basics. 80% of them got well after doing only bowel cleansing. The same excellent results have been reported by Dr. Majid Ali, the president of Capital University of Integrative Medicine in Washington, D.C., and the medical director of The Institute for Preventative Medicine of Danville, New Jersey. According to his integrative health model, Dr. Ali first cleanses the bowels, liver and blood. He encourages his patients to apply castor oil packs and take coffee enemas. He also instructs them to do limbic exercise and breathing. After years of clinical practice the great physicians and healers of our time have come to the same conclusion about the importance of detoxification.

IV. Detoxification Techniques

The following is a brief survey of detoxification techniques for organ and tissue cleansing and for specific toxins.

1. Routes of Detoxification

Although the liver is the largest detoxification organ, detoxification proceeds through four major exit routes: the skin, lungs, kidneys/bladder and colon. Toxins come out through the pores via the sweat, and through the sebaceous glands via the oils. The sweat glands are important; if put together they would amount to the size of a kidney. These glands filter the blood going into the skin. Volatile organic compounds as well as carbon dioxide are exhaled through the lungs. Metabolic wastes and lipid-soluble compounds are excreted via the bile into the colon. Heavy metals and other water-soluble compounds are excreted through the kidneys and bladder. Some heavy metals are also eliminated via bile through the colon.

There are also minor detoxification processes: hair, nails, phlegm, and menses act as detoxification routes. The body has the wisdom to utilize any tissue that is constantly shed. For example, hair loss constitutes a good route for eliminating heavy metals. Hair analysis is often used by alternative and integrative health practitioners as a way of checking heavy metal toxicity. Chemicals and heavy metals can alter the structure of a nail and become part of it. The menstrual flow is a good way of eliminating toxins as well. The loss of this route of elimination is also one of the reasons why women have more frequent urination after menopause.

One route of toxin elimination is what I call a gift of God and should not be abused. Some women have experienced traumatic loss of babies through still births and spontaneous abortions. Often times the babies were not able to survive because of the high toxic burden of the mother. I have known mothers with severe heavy metal toxicity to have a history of spontaneous abortions. It is estimated that the first child takes 40% of the mother's toxic load. If true, this birth problem is a blessing in disguise for those grieving mothers.

Keeping these many major and minor routes of elimination properly functioning is a good way to achieve vibrant health. However, abortion is never an option for clearing the toxic burden. I hope those who aspire to be mothers, seek thorough cleansing before conception.

2. Organ and Tissue Detoxification

Most cleansing techniques are what I call simulated healing processes. They simulate or enhance the natural detoxification processes of our bodies. For example, if one ingests toxic food, vomiting often ensues. Emetic therapies are

used to rid toxins in the digestive tract by vomiting. Emetic therapies are therefore simulated vomiting. When one gets a bacterial or viral infection, fever ensues. Fever therapies, as induced by Coley's toxins, provoke fevers to get rid of cancer. Fever therapies are thus simulated fever.

Colon hydrotherapy cleans out the colon, and is similar to the process of diarrhea that cleans up the toxic colon. Thus, colon hydrotherapy is simulated diarrhea. However, colon hydrotherapy is also good for constipation. In this case, a colonic is used to counteract, rather than simulate, the symptom. Thus, not all natural detoxification processes or procedures follow the principle of simulation.

In this issue we have assembled many articles with practical tips for lung, colon, skin, kidney and liver detoxification. I will focus here on my favorite subject: skin detoxification. Readers are encouraged to look into relevant titles in the list of recommended readings.

3. Skin and Kidney Detoxification

Many health practitioners stick to their natural or synthetic pills for colon and kidney detoxification and forget about the use of heat/sweat and baths. Some of their patients suffer from the undue side effects of detoxification. Patients with high permeability in their guts are especially affected. The skin and kidneys are better routes for elimination of toxins. There is a long history of using sweating and baths for healing in many cultures. The Romans popularized baths; however, the Egyptians, Mayans, Chinese, Japanese, Native Americans, the Finns, and many other Europeans realized early on the healing power of this type of spa treatment. I personally prefer skin detoxification. However, those with skin conditions need to be cautious in doing intensive detoxification through the skin, initially, lest they aggravate the symptoms.

Anatomy of the Skin

The anatomy of our skin tells us that this is one large excretory organ. A sweat gland is structurally similar to the basic renal unit, the glomerulus. Both are built for filtration of the blood. In addition, the skin contains many sensory receptors. Please see Dr. Davidson's article on Bioresonance Therapy, which informs us that the skin provides great input to the autonomic nervous system. Symbolically, the skin represents the self. It separates us from the non-self or the environment. Each and every cell in the body is also separated by membranes. The skin is the macrocosm of the cellular microcosm within us.

Sweating is a Natural Detoxification Process

The skin guards against infections and releases heat in the form of sweat to keep our body temperature constant; the excretion of sweat helps patients detoxify. However, metallic toxins are stored in fat and mobilization of these toxins by any

means will cause one to experience some symptoms. Too fast a mobilization can be counterproductive, especially when the elimination capacity is overwhelmed. Then, the released toxins may settle down in different parts of the body, prolonging the healing crisis and causing unnecessary, secondary cellular damage. The best way to subdue a healing crisis and minimize secondary damage is to increase skin detoxification. Many chronically ill patients do not sweat. In The Traditional Chinese Medical Tradition of the 5 elements, the skin is in the same element category as the lungs and colon, all of which pertain to elimination. If toxins cannot be effectively excreted through the colon, skin conditions often develop. Patients going through intensive detoxification often experience skin blemishes.

Fevers and Hyperthermia

Fever is the ultimate sweating mechanism. Cycles of chills and fevers contract and expand blood vessels and improve blood circulation. This allows immune cells to reach every corner of the body, resulting in a natural resolution of infections. Immune cells also function better at their optimal temperature, which is 104 degrees. In addition, high body temperatures also liquify the stagnant, sticky lymph fluid (just like heat makes gelatin more watery) for better drainage. No wonder some hydrotherapies utilize alternating low and high temperatures to help toxin removal.

According to epidemiological studies, there is an inverse relationship between the increased risk of cancer and a history of missing fevers. That is, if you have never had a fever in your life, your chance of getting cancer is greatly increased. That's another piece of evidence demonstrating the significance of fevers. Detoxification through sweat can be even more profound when the element of spirituality is added.

Sweat is More Than Skin Deep

The reason why sweat can be more than skin deep is best described by Dr. Rudolph Ballentine, M.D., a leading integrative medical doctor and the author of *Radical Healing*, who claims that the sweat lodge is a testing ground for our spiritual resolve. He says, "There are moments when you feel that you cannot stand it any longer and that you have to get out. Your fears can intensify your discomfort, and confronting those fears is said to be facing your greatest enemy. Sweat was recognized as physically cleansing and health-giving, but it is more than that. Like the alchemist's retort, the sweat lodge was a place where a transformative cooking occurred, fusing deep conflicts to forge a new way of being. The sweat lodge is a tangible expression of the intricate mingling of being tested, of being reduced to the mere bones of your life before being guided into a rebirth – a re-creation of yourself – through the ordeal of the cleansing crisis. It demonstrates in a humble, yet eloquent way the connection between physical healing and the realm of the spirit. What is released in the experience of the

sweat lodge is the confining consciousness of a limited, fearful ego, and the physical encrustations that hold your body in a form that can only express such a constricted consciousness. Then you are free.x

Bed, Baths and Beyond

Bed, Bath and Beyond may be a good place for linen or bedding, but I am talking about the benefits of water immersion followed by bed rest.

Does bathing have any health benefit? Immersion studies have found that increased urinary output is one of the most characteristic effects of bathing on healthy individuals. However, these studies did not find the use of water from hot springs necessary to induce this physiological effect. Even tap water is able to increase urinary output. Is the therapeutic effect of bathing largely from increased urination? If so, are heavy metals also excreted after bathing? I discovered that many biological dentists recommend mineral baths to their patients for heavy metal detoxification. It would be interesting to collect the urine and bath water to determine whether heavy metals are excreted via the urine and/or skin. Since the body's systems are all integrated, the excretion of water, salt and urea affects many other physiological functions as well,. In addition, it would be very interesting to determine whether there are any subtle differences on the energetic level from the use of hot spring water versus tap water for detoxification. Past studies on bodily immersion never addressed the possibility of subtle energetic changes with spring water.

The health benefits of baths go beyond the skin and/or kidney detoxification. When we visit a spa or resort with hot springs, we are taken out of our routine social context and have more time to relax and rest. If you are chronically ill, your living and/or working environment most likely contributes to your illness. Just being taken out of that context may facilitate healing. After all, out of sight out of mind.

Immersion baths are not without risks. Paracelsus warned against warm baths in cases of edema due to congested heart disease. Other physicians also recognize that certain mineral or hot baths could provoke a range of adverse effects such as: headaches, convulsions, copious sweating, fever, vomiting and even death. These effects may be due to ingestion of the mineral waters or bathing in waters so hot that they raised body temperature too high. Drinking enough fluid before, during and after bathing certainly can prevent most of these adverse effects.

Variety of Baths

There are several types of baths that are commonly utilized for the purpose of detoxification. They are mineral, steam, clay and hot spring baths, and sauna.

1. Mineral Baths

Mineral baths are those with Epsom salt and baking soda.

The following are examples of detoxifying mineral baths recommended by Mark Brenner, D.D.S. in his book, *Whole Body Dentistry*. For the first two weeks of detoxification, do a baking soda bath by putting $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of baking soda in the water. Soak in a tub for 10-20 minutes in water temperature that is comfortably pleasant. Take this bath twice a week with at least a couple days in between. Continue bathing or showering as you usually would in addition to the baking soda baths.

After two weeks (depending on how you feel) choose from one of the following: (1) Epsom salt bath, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup to a tub of water to be used when you are feeling strong; (2) combination bath, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup Epsom salt and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup baking soda to a tub of water; (3) baking soda bath, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup to a tub of water to be used when you are feeling tired and fragile; and (4) basin bathing, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of baking soda or epsom salt in a sink of warm water. Wipe body with a wash cloth and pat dry. After your bath, take a shower with a wash cloth and soap to remove any toxins that may be on the surface of the skin.

I frequently suggest that people add ginger tea to their mineral baths. The ginger tea is made from fresh ginger root, which is sliced into pieces and boiled in water for 10-20 minutes. The liquid is then added to the bath to further provoke vasodilation, which stimulates stronger excretory and detoxifying effects.

Epsom salt, baking soda and ginger root are all inexpensive. Some suggest sea salt baths for detoxification. Sea salt is more expensive though.

2. Steam Baths

Steam baths use high-temperature steam to increase peripheral circulation to eliminate toxins through the skin. Oxygen (in the form of ozone), herbs and essential oils can be added to the enhance detoxifying power of the steam. Many clients have described to me their excretion of toxins from oxygen steam baths. They see colorful spots on the white towels they sat on. I have personally witnessed this phenomenon several times after my own steam sessions.

The steam bath is one of my favorite forms of detoxification. I am grateful that my client, Hannah, shared with me information from a self-healing book on how to build an affordable home steam tent from a bed sheet. You put the steam source under a plastic chair and wrap yourself in a bed sheet to form a tent while sitting on the chair. Put your feet in a pot of hot water and wrap up your head to facilitate sweating. These home steam bath materials cost less than one hundred dollars. Otherwise, you can easily purchase a portable steam tent from \$220 to \$250.

3. Clay Baths

Clay has the advantage of drawing positively charged metals and toxins out of the skin. It is great for cold weather and hot summer when perspiration causes dehydration and stress. I suggest that people use lukewarm or cool water for summer clay baths. This way they avoid the risk of being overly dehydrated. Dehydration prevents detoxification.

Another reason why I like clay for detoxification is its easy use for children. Very few children are going to turn down the opportunity of playing in dirt. But they certainly will scream and kick when shots are injected, or frown and groan when forced to take supplement pills. Stress prevents detoxification, while play facilitates it.

4. Dry Sauna – Far Infrared Sauna (FIR)

The dry sauna uses Far Infrared as a heat source. Those made of poplar wood are allegedly better than those of cedar wood, especially for people with multiple chemical sensitivity problems.

Scientists, whether you believe in their ideas or not, have one of the most exhaustive detoxification protocols. One takes niacin in the beginning to cause a flush, exercises for half an hour, and then sits in a sauna for many hours.

5. Hot Springs

Many natural hot springs have alleged healing properties. These springs are frequently used in indigenous cultures for physical and spiritual healing. I like it for the children because you can incorporate it into a family outing. The possibility of children to rejecting an outing for fun is slimmer than rejection of sauna treatment for health at home.

Check your local travel agency or AAA for those healing springs. In the side bar is a list that I have compiled through the AAA tour books and other source materials. Spas that have natural springs and other treatments for detoxification and stress reduction are the future of healing.

6. Chemical Detoxification and Microbial Cleansing

Many health practitioners use comprehensive and integrative protocols for chemical detoxification. Different protocols are used for different groups of chemicals. I have solicited articles by Dr. Amtoft-Nielson on pesticide detoxification, Lauana Lei on radiation detoxification, and Leo Cahsman and Timothy Ray on mercury detoxification.

There are also various holistic and integrative protocols for bacterial, viral, mycoplasma or parasite cleansing.

7. Detoxification for the Mind and Spirit

Toxins of the mind and spirit need to be detoxified as well. These toxins often obstruct the progress of physical detoxification. Many people overlook this aspect. Dr. Balletinexs description of the sweat lodge clearly tells us that these healing treatments need not be merely physical. Incorporating emotional and spiritual release into your detoxification will further your recovery. Many people suppress their spiritual and mental toxins leaving little energy for full recovery.

For the well being of your mind and spirit, you can seek counseling and psychotherapy; however, there are newer, energetic, therapies that are very effective and provide alternatives to traditional talk therapies. You can do journaling, expressive art therapy, neuro-emotional techniques (such as emotional freedom technique, thought field therapy, color therapy, etc.), meditation and guided imagery, visualization, and so forth. One author presents an ancient Chinese technique for releasing physical and spiritual toxins through massage of the navel. However, there is a simpler way to release your emotional and spiritual strains. Laugh out loud! Hearty laughter triggers certain facial muscles that are connected to the release of endorphins. Exchanging hugs is also very therapeutic for the soul.

Developing your spirituality is helpful for cleansing the mind and body. Of course, true spirituality promotes love and respect and is not akin to hatred and violence. Showing disrespect for fellow human beings and resorting to violence in the name of God are not spiritual. The next issue of IH&H provides in depth exploration of importance of spirituality in healing.

V. Prevention of Intoxication

Of course, as the best treatment for illness is prevention, so too is prevention the best protocol for detoxification. Toxins can enter our bodies through four routes: absorption through the skin; inhalation through the respiratory tract into the lungs; by ingestion through the mouth into the gastrointestinal tract; and, of course, absorption into the reproductive organs through sex. Thus, avoiding toxic cosmetics, breathing fresh, clear air, ingesting healthy food and clean water, and practicing safe sex are all good ways of preventing intoxication. Maintaining a balanced and positive attitude as well as keeping faith and fostering a sense of spirituality prevent the generation of toxic emotions and belief systems from within

Building materials have become so toxic that many houses, offices and schools are referred to as “sick buildings.” People living in these buildings get diagnosed

with sick building syndrome. Richard Leviton has provided us with some tips to avoid or cut down our exposure in this setting.

VI. Conclusions

Like nourishment and regeneration, cleansing is a basic tool for healing ourselves. Flooding our chronically ill bodies with more drugs, which are toxic in themselves, will not restore our health. Chronic illnesses are due to accumulated toxicity, not lack of prescription drugs. We need to recognize that the healer within us has great healing power. If we cleanse ourselves of toxins, we will heal.

However, healing ourselves cannot be separated from the healing of the environment. It is difficult to remain detoxified while living in a polluted environment. We need to live in a manner that sustains our environment and preserves the health of our planet.

Sweating, induced by high heat, is one of the most important ways to cleanse ourselves. It is like a good down pour, a healing rain that cleans up the environment after a dog day. Mother nature has provided us with natural solutions for our illnesses and environmental woes. We need to practice those natural laws.

As such, my philosophy of healing is not to suppress the symptoms, but to utilize the natural defense mechanisms that we possess to facilitate the resolution of symptoms. Fever is the ultimate natural defense mechanism for getting rid of infectious agents and toxins. Hence hyperthermia is an artificial healing method akin to its natural counterpart. A good way to differentiate good and bad detoxification techniques is to see whether they foster our own healing mechanisms.

To achieve more permanent recovery, I encourage you to seek deep and true detoxification by changing your mind-set, behavior patterns and belief systems that have been detrimental to your health. There is no such thing as the separation of body, mind and spirit. Healing the body without cleansing the mind and spirit will never occur. I chased down that blind alley and came out empty-handed and disappointed. But I have found my peace in cleansing my emotions and reclaiming my spirit. I have been healthier ever since.

Dr Li-Chuan Chen